



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

**Fish and Wildlife Service
National Biological Survey**

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EARTH STEWARDS CONSERVATION EDUCATION PROGRAM LAUNCHED

Reading, writing, arithmetic -- and wildlife stewardship? Wildlife and habitat conservation may become as much a part of a youngster's curriculum as traditional subjects through "Earth Stewards," an innovative education program being developed by the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Biological Survey and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Earth Stewards seeks to educate students at all grade levels about conservation topics such as endangered species, migratory birds, wetlands, and biodiversity and teach them how to become good stewards of natural resources. The unique program includes interdisciplinary classroom activities and hands-on community conservation projects, and involves not only Service and NBS professionals but also members of the community who have expertise relevant to a school's chosen conservation topic.

"Earth Stewards is more than just listening to lectures," said Service Director Mollie Beattie. "Students may learn about endangered species by writing poetry and stories, painting, or studying habitat requirements. Then they get a chance to actually get their hands dirty by participating in a community

(more)

conservation project right alongside the professionals. When they clean up a park or restore habitat along a stream they will have the satisfaction of seeing the fruits of their labor and knowing they have done something important."

The pilot programs now are being developed for the 1994-95 school year in Pleasantville, New Jersey; Barrington, Illinois; Pierre, South Dakota; Anchorage, Alaska; Willows, California; Columbia, Missouri; and Lafayette, Louisiana. These areas correspond with selected locations of Service field offices and NBS research centers.

"The future of our Nation's biological resources depends on a strong science base. That begins with innovative education programs to stimulate the interest of the public -- especially our youth," said NBS Director Designate Ronald Pulliam. "Earth Stewards provides a format for teaching future generations about conservation. We see the program as an investment in our children and our environment."

In addition to helping the participating schools develop their curricula, Service and NBS professionals will give class presentations and lead field trips. Community natural resource professionals and others will also be tapped to participate in these activities as well as the stewardship projects.

Teachers from participating schools will be awarded scholarships to attend workshops designed to assist them in teaching their chosen conservation topics.

"The Foundation is glad to help get this exciting program off the ground," said Executive Director of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Amos S. Eno. "Using a variety of disciplines and giving youngsters an opportunity to apply what they learn is a great way to educate them about the importance of conservation."

This year's pilot programs are supported by a Foundation challenge grant which consists of an \$80,000 pledge to match \$160,000 in state or private monies. The Foundation was established by Congress in 1984 to support fish and wildlife conservation efforts. Those interested in contributing may contact Rebecca Brown, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 1120 Connecticut Avenue, NW., Suite 900, Washington, DC, 20036, telephone (202) 857-5669.

For further information on Earth Stewards, contact Project Director Claire Cassel, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Training and Education, 4040 North Fairfax Drive, Arlington, Virginia, 22203, telephone (703) 358-2504.